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THE YEAR OF DECISION FOR ITALY

by a Correspondent in Rome

What will happen to Italy in the near future?

There are many reasons for anxiety, in spite of American support; notwithstanding inclusion of the moderate Socialists in the Government and the calling off of the general strike in Rome. Attacks against the foundations of the young Italian Republic have become particularly insistent since ratification of the Italian Peace Treaty by Russia last September. Now, with evacuation of the Allied occupation forces, these attacks seem to have reached their peak.

This belief is strongly confirmed by the alarming events which took place throughout Italy during the last two months of 1947. In France, the Communist attempt to paralyze the country by a general strike completely failed. In Italy, on the contrary, demonstrations of a similar kind have on the whole succeeded.

We refer to the unexpected and daring assault which the Communists tried in Milan during the last week of November, when for three days they took over all local government, and also to the general strike which was called in Rome during the second week of December. There is an attempt to minimize the importance of these connected "incidents". In fact it is hardly possible to view these events placidly. Their alarming significance is too evident.

The "direct action" of the Italian Communists in Milan revealed a number of disquieting facts. It showed that: (1) in Italy, at any time, well-disciplined Communists can be mobilized in sufficient strength to assume control of all municipal functions; (2) it is possible to set up a Communist Soviet, which can force the National Government to negotiate with it; (3) at least a part of the police forces are unreliable; (4) the great majority of the Italian people is politically tired and does not react with vigor and decision against occurrences which threaten the very existence of democratic institutions.

The recent Italian disorders prove incidentally that there is a great difference between the struggle which the French and the Italians are waging against Communist onslaught. The way in which the French

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stood up to the test is significant. It shows that the French people -- having by tradition a strong feeling for the close interdependence between their internal and external politics -- are again conscious of the historical greatness of their country.

II

The popular reaction to the Communist offensive in France shows that the French people realize the necessity for a close cultural, economic and political collaboration between France and the great Anglo-Saxon democracies; that they understand the vital importance of defending their colonial empire and their national prestige. For all those reasons the French resolutely and in ever-increasing numbers turn against those alien elements which are trying to drag France into the abyss of political impotence and collective slavery.

The Italians, on the other hand, give only a feeble indication of understanding the events of our time. Twenty years of Fascist rule, culminating in a lost war, have made this country politically apathetic. The Italian sense for foreign politics, and its importance for national life, is surprisingly undeveloped. The people lack historic appreciation of their own institutions.

In regard to colonial empire and world prestige, the Italians no longer have anything to defend. Through their eastern frontier, difficult to control, "undesirable strangers" pass by the thousands. All the big Italian cities swarm with Russian spies and foreign agents. Efficient check on their subversive activities is in this country more difficult than in France. The French have already arrived at a point where, in their struggle against Communism and Russian penetration, they are to a great extent helping themselves. The Italians still depend on the help, advice and support of others.

This must be kept in mind, if one realizes that in Italy the "decisive battle" with the Communists is still to come. Communism in Italy is at the present time on the defensive. This does not mean that the Party has given up the struggle. Very much to the contrary. As a Moscow-trained tactician, Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of the Italian Communists and one of the shrewdest revolutionaries of our time, knows only too well that the best means of defense is to attack.

Togliatti certainly sees with displeasure that the general trend is against his cause. The Communists in Italy, too, are gradually losing ground. The number of their antagonists is growing, and the present Italian Government, its prestige noticeably increased by the inclusion of the independent Socialists (Saragat) and Republicans

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(Pacciardy), has a fair chance of winning in March the first free parliamentary elections of the new Italy. But these very facts force Togliatti to redouble his efforts and attacks against the de Gasperi Government, against its American friends and in general against everything which blocks the transformation of Italy into a Soviet satellite.

III

"Every day a stroke, every day an attack, every day a revolt of some sort!" is therefore Togliatti's present slogan. "Not a moment's peace for the de Gasperi Government and its supporters!"

This attitude seems strange and incomprehensible to many American observers of Italian events. "The Italian Communists", they argue, "are fighting a hopeless battle. Should they lose, they will be weaker than before. So what sense is there in squandering their forces?"

Those who argue in this way unwittingly put the Communists on the same level with any other ordinary political party. This is a great error, for the Communist Party is not political in the ordinary sense. It is a very extraordinary party. When a political movement is backed by a mighty and unscrupulous World Power and, in addition, can count on the support of hundreds of thousands of fifth column agents in almost every country, then such a "party" is not fighting a "hopeless battle". It can very well permit itself the occasional luxury of "squandering its forces", because they are practically inexhaustible.

Confirmation of this could lately be seen in France. Most likely a nation-wide general strike will before long be called in Italy, too. With the important difference, however, that the Italian Communists are much more easily supported from across the border (Yugoslavia) than their French comrades. Therefore, the situation of Italy -- should it come to "direct action" on a grand scale -- would have a more dangerous aspect and be more difficult to solve than was the case in France.

In view of these prospects the question arises: What can be done by the United States to give the young Italian Republic more efficient support in its struggle against Communism?

IV

Until recently the great majority of Americans have laid stress on the economic side of the problem. "It would be quite sufficient", they said in substance, "to give the Italians enough to eat. Then the specter of Communism will disappear. Even the Marshall plan seems to a great extent based on this assumption.

Is this thesis incontestable? We, in Italy, doubt it. Those of us who have seen the Communist agitators succeed, in districts where

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there is hardly any economic distress, have necessarily come to the conclusion that there must be some error in this calculation.

Italy cannot be saved by economic aid alone. Something more is needed. And it must be forthcoming soon, if one wishes to save Italy from falling, like so many other European countries before her, a prey to Communist and Russian aggression.

The interest shown by Americans over the fate of Italy is greatly appreciated by all democratic-minded and freedom-loving people. "But what precautions" -- one hears them asking -- "have been taken, to assure that the help offered Italy by the Marshall plan will come in time?" Russia, after a long period of hesitation, in September suddenly ratified the Italian Peace Treaty. That is generally interpreted as demonstrating Moscow's wish to synchronize the departure of the Allied forces from Italy with the particularly difficult mid-winter season; and with completion of the necessary underground preparations.

What are the plans of the vast Communist underground organization in Italy? Overthrow -- by legal or illegal means -- of the Christian Democratic government of de Gasperi and its replacement by a Leftist government of the so-called "Peoples Block" would be the first step. The next move would be a radical fusion of Italy's whole internal and foreign policy with that of the Balkan Block. The Communists hope that the installation of a new Leftist regime in Italy, and the turning of its policy in a new direction, may be accomplished before March, the date fixed for the first parliamentary elections of the new Italian Republic.

The coup can be expected to take place before adoption of the Marshall plan, and before any revision of the Italian Peace Treaty. Representative government is necessarily slow in avoiding and preventing dangers that threaten peace. Moreover, 1948 is the year of the Presidential elections.

The whole public life of the U.S.A. -- the Kremlin calculates -- will to a great extent be paralyzed during 1948 by the election campaign. This, therefore, will be the right time, first to lull American public opinion by a show of "collaboration with the Western democracies"; then to strike a hard blow at a place -- Italy -- where success seems most likely to be assured in advance.

Our Italian correspondent writes: "In view of Communist reprisals I would much prefer to remain anonymous."

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. V, NO. 1

By Frank C. Hanighen January 7, 1948

A hitherto undisclosed picture of President Truman's real attitude on the Palestine partition question has been presented to this column by high official sources. If the President follows through, then the repercussions on his domestic political chances in 1948 may prove serious.

To understand the picture, it is necessary to review the domestic background of the Palestine partition problem. When the U. S. delegation to the UN backed the partition of Palestine, it was generally assumed by political observers that the President had decided that the Jewish vote was of more importance than strategic considerations involved in the Near East situation. When the final vote on partition came up, the Zionist pressure on the administration to insure a favorable vote in the UN was strong. "Arm-twisting" of small nations followed, and they were "persuaded" to cast their votes for partition. The result, from the domestic political standpoint, is highly favorable to Mr. Truman. Today, it is reported that the bulk of the Jews are grateful to Truman and he will receive many Jewish votes.

The high official sources mentioned above give us quite a different version. They say that last September Mr. Truman told Secretary Marshall that the latter must take full responsibility for the handling of the Palestine problem; that no considerations of a domestic political nature should sway him; that he (Marshall) should base his decision purely on the best interests of the country. Marshall decided on his own responsibility for partition, for reasons which involve another story. But, it is emphasized, Truman has remained aloof from this question and has not tried in any way to influence Marshall's policy.

This picture of Truman lends support to another viewpoint being expressed in certain official circles. These circles are saying that Truman is now listening exclusively to military advisers who are critical of the partition policy; and that he is not accessible to pro-partition elements. These circles go further, also, and say that ere long the strategic situation in the Near East will be so disturbing that Mr. Truman will reverse, in some form or other, the pro-partition policy. If Mr. Truman does reverse this policy, how extensive will be his losses of Jewish votes in New York State? Few political observers doubt that they will be great.

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The Democratic Party bosses are eyeing not only the Jewish but also the Catholic vote. Many Catholics, it is believed, voted Republican in 1946, because they believed the Truman Administration favored the Reds in its foreign policy. Now the Democratic leaders think that they can retrieve these electors by naming a Catholic as Vice-Presidential candidate. Senator O'Mahoney of Wyoming is the man, and he reportedly has the powerful backing of Senator McGrath, head of the Democratic National Committee.

O'Mahoney is a Catholic and was born and raised in Massachusetts -- a fact that prompts the Democratic leaders to hope that he can swing that state. He is also a member of the liberal Democratic bloc in the Senate and as a proponent of reclamation projects might attract many votes in western states. At least, so think those Democratic chieftains who believe that the second place on the ticket can affect the preference of voters.

A cloud of gloom has settled over Democratic headquarters since the day when Wallace tossed his hat in the ring; and it shows no signs of lifting. The White House consulted a Western Democratic Senator about his estimate of Wallace strength in the Senator's state. He guessed that it would total 20,000 votes; and in that

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state, such a vote has often tipped the scales in close elections. It is reported from Massachusetts that a poll showed Wallace to have 11 per cent of the total. If this should be his proportion in a general election, the Bay State may move back in the Republican column for the first time since 1924.

Another specter looms. It is believed that Wallace will enter full slates in those states where he gets on the ballot. Politicos judge that this will insure election of many Republican Members of Congress whose tenure has been considered doubtful. Such a development would also extinguish recent Democratic hopes that their party would win a majority in the Senate next year. As a matter of fact, the GOP has been very worried about its hold on the Senate. Most of the Democratic senatorial incumbents standing for re-election in '48 are from the Solid South, and only one of the four northern Democratic senators running for re-election next year was expected to face trouble. The Democrats hoped to pick off at least a half dozen seats from the Republicans. All that speculation has changed. With the prospect of Wallace splitting the Democratic vote, Republican fears have abated, and they feel confident of holding a majority in the upper chamber.

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On January 2, the Navy announced that marines were being sent to the Mediterranean fleet. The news was released just as the fighting between the Greek Government forces and the Communist guerrillas of the "Free Greek Government" had reached its height. The latter received arms and supplies from across the border in Soviet-dominated Albania. At about the same time, on December 30, the Inter-Allied Reparations Commission announced that Albania had been allocated an aircraft factory from among dismantled German war plants.

Those who find "something wrong with this picture" may carry further their study of anomalies in our foreign policy to the fascinating field of the dismantling of German plants. On the current list of factories in the French zone marked for dismantling is Europe's largest pre-war synthetic nitrogen plant at Oppau. This plant produced nitrogen for fertilizer. The four principal U. S. Government reports on the Marshall plan (Nourse, Krug, Harriman and Herter reports) all emphasize the crucial problem of inadequate fertilizer production in the world today.

According to Mr. Herbert Hoover, German nitrogen capacity was 700,000 tons at the time of V-E Day, despite all wartime bombings. After the Morgenthau Plan was started, this capacity was reduced partly by dismantling, partly by non-delivery of essential materials, and partly by red tape. By 1946, nitrogen production in the bi-zone was only 100,000 tons, and even in 1947 had not risen above 127,000 tons. Part of the deficit was covered by nitrogen exported from the U. S. to Germany, although the American farmer is short of nitrogen.

It is calculated that under average weather conditions one ton of nitrogen produces 600 bushels of additional grain crop. Therefore, the 500,000 tons of nitrogen production in Germany lost in each of the years 1946 and 1947 corresponds to an approximate loss of 300 million bushels a year in Western Europe's food production. This amounts yearly to threefold the amount the American consumer was asked to save in the Luckman food conservation program.

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Dr. Charles A. Beard last week cut through an atmosphere thick with platitudes when he addressed the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington. The Evening Star (December 30) reported the historian's remarks as follows: "American political scientists have neglected the study of war, he said, because of 'the moral concept of ourselves as a "peace-loving people". Any professor who challenges the truth of this is likely to be treated as a rude and wanton

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disturber of a prayer meeting.' He quoted Franklin D. Roosevelt before his election to the Presidency as listing the wars of the United States and asking: 'Yes, we are a very peace-loving people, aren't we?'

"American political historians, Dr. Beard said, do not treat war 'as a primary datum, marked by some of the certainty that characterizes death and taxes, but as a wicked practice forced upon us, much to our indignation, by aggressive foreigners and then waged by us only for enduring peace, world democracy, and the rights of small nations, including, by all means, colored and other minorities'. Dr. Beard prescribed a system of daily exercises to overcome the 'tyranny of specialization'. One of them was: 'We might contribute a little to advancement of learning and good will among peoples by trying to see ourselves as other nations see us, to think of them as far as possible in terms of their thought of themselves and to get rid of the insidious idea that the United States has been designated by God as a kind of cosmic committee for the Americanization of mankind and the final revision of universal history.'

"'It is a well-established fact that many historic crises have ended in the destruction of societies and governments', he said, 'and hence it cannot be taken as certain that every crisis will produce its appropriate savior who brings peace of mind and due satisfaction to all deserving people.'"

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In keeping with Dr. Beard's injunction, we reproduce the following quotations from British publications, to show how "others see us". The London Observer looks at the recent session of the UN: "The big disappointment has been the American delegation which was supposed to occupy the center of the stage. Mrs. Roosevelt has not been much in evidence. Senator Austin has seemed wholly senatorial, and an inept debater, Herschel Johnson is competent, official, but not inspired, and Secretary Marshall has been noticeably absent."

The Economist is similarly unsparing (December 6): "Englishmen who feel exasperated at the part played by Liberia and Haiti in the decision to divide Palestine can now imagine what the Russians and their voting bloc may feel about the session of the Uno Assembly now drawing to a close. The experience of being outvoted by six to one on every major question must have left even Mr. Vishinsky sore; and not a few delegates have been feeling that the American bloc of voters has shown itself as blatantly dutiful as the Russian. The system under which Liberia's vote is as good as that of the Soviet Union recalls the age of pocket boroughs when Old Sarum's representative cast as good a vote as the member for Liverpool."

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As a footnote to any discussion of the passing of the Roosevelt New Deal, it is interesting to report that today Justice Felix Frankfurter wields little political power in the Capital. His pervasive influence which once reached into all departments of the Government now is said to be effective only in the Washington Post, whose publisher, Philip Graham, was formerly Frankfurter's secretary.

Frankfurter's prestige as a jurist has also declined; as may be seen in the following merciless paragraph from an article in the Yale Law Review (September, 1947), by Professor Walton Hamilton. "A host of truths, quite ugly truths, need to be spoken", says Professor Hamilton. "Mr. Justice Frankfurter has no feel for the dominant issues; he operates best when weaving crochet patches of legalism on the fingers of a case. He does the best he can, often very well indeed, with the techniques in which he is proficient; it is a calamity that his skills happen to be petty skills. He is the victim of a bad legal education; but the Court has no business in allowing him to select, from all the issues the case holds, the question upon which it must turn."

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Book Events

Epitaph On Nuremberg, By Montgomery Belgion. London: The Falcon Press, Ltd. Three shillings. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

The thesis of this grave and closely-reasoned little essay is contained in the quotation with which it concludes. "We conceal from ourselves", wrote Mr. T. S. Eliot in 1939, "the similarity of our society to those we execrate". This is given concrete illustration in Mr. Belgion's analysis of the Nuremberg trials. To call the conduct of those trials by the name of international justice, Mr. Belgion argues, is to accept the notion voiced by Thrasymachus and refuted by Socrates in one of the earlier books of the Republic of Plato, namely that justice is "whatever serves the interest of the stronger", a definition, ironically enough, reiterated by one of the Nuremberg defendants who hanged himself on the eve of his trial.

Thus what Mr. Belgion is concerned with proving is that, under the principles accepted by the International Military Tribunal, the Nazi crimes in Europe would have been fully justified if Germany had won the war. The Nazis would have been equally justified in hanging, on the pretext of war guilt, whomever they pleased among the vanquished, including of course those whom the opposite turn of fate made judges at Nuremberg. His argument is based, first, upon the obvious point that there can be no real justice where the purposes of prosecutor and judge are identical. Second, the governments or armies of the nations whose representatives served as judges were themselves demonstrably guilty of crimes of the same character as were charged to the defendants. Mr. Belgion cities of course the instances of mass deportations, exterminations of minorities, imprisonments without judicial process and similar "crimes against humanity" by the Russians, surpassing in magnitude and horror even those of the Nazis. Indeed, crimes of this character were being perpetrated in the Russian zone of Germany while the Nuremberg trials were in progress.

As for the "war crimes", which included wholesale massacres of civilians and noncombatants, Mr. Belgion recalls the saturation bombings of German cities and towns and the atomic destruction of Hiroshima. As for the looting of occupied territories, there was the example of all four armies of occupation in Germany, before and during and after the trials, and of the "displaced persons" who looted with the encouragement and protection of the military. In the British army, says Mr. Belgion, looting, although forbidden in the regulations under the sternest penalties, was nevertheless "actively encouraged in all ranks". Mr. Belgion says, dryly, he has no specific information about the conduct of the American armies in Germany in this particular, but supposes that he can make a safe inference from what he observed of the conduct of American soldiers in liberated France. As for forced labor, there are, besides the deportations to the Russian slave camps, the examples of German war prisoners in France and Britain, many of them supplied from the United States under pretext of repatriation. As for the inhuman treatment of prisoners, there is the testimony of Julius Streicher at his trial that his American guards had beaten him, obliged him to kiss the feet of Negro soldiers, offered him urine when he asked for water, forced him to drink spittle by placing wedges in his mouth, kept him for four days naked in his cell. There is the case of Mr. Ezra Pound, the poet, now plausibly described as insane, who for nearly two months was kept in unsheltered solitary confinement without bed or other furniture, exposed by day to a fierce Italian sun and by night to the glare and heat of spotlights. There were the women members of the S. S. who were tortured by British guards. As for the "conspiracies against peace", on which Mr. Justice Jackson placed so much emphasis, Mr. Belgion had only to cite the Russian record in relation to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland.

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